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ORGANIZATIONAL, SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE CANADIAN FORCES *

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As with the Canadian labour force, the composition of the Canadian Forces (CF) has changed over the last 20 years. This has largely been the result of socio-demographic and economic trends, as well as downsizing initiatives taken in the 1990s. The overall organizational structure of the CF, albeit reduced, still resembles that of a quarter of a century ago, but the demographic profile of serving members and their families has changed considerably. The purpose of this paper is to report on organizational, social and demographic changes in the Canadian Regular Force, focussing on 1976 to 1996. Implications of these changes are also identified.

CF STRUCTURE

Restructuring in the CF. The Regular Force is now 27% smaller than it was in 1986. December 1996 signified the culmination of the Force Reduction Program (FRP) which led to the release of close to 14,000 CF members during the program's five-year span. As a result, effective December 1996, there were 61,640 Regular members, compared to 84,826 a decade earlier. By 1999, it is expected that the strength of the Regular Force will be about 60,000.

The CF Rank Structure. Since unification of the Forces in 1967, the CF rank structure has not changed. Despite successive reorganizations prompted by reductions in funding and program reviews, Regular Force representation by rank has changed very little between 1976 to 1996. The ratio of Officers to Non-Commission Members (NCMs) has remained at about one to four. Of interest, the percentage of Corporals/Privates has declined from 45.6% in 1976, to 40.8% by 1996. In particular, the number of privates has declined considerably, from almost 15,000 to about 5,000. This is largely a result of the very limited recruiting during the past five years.

The proportion of high ranking officers has marginally declined. Generals represent just over one tenth of a percent (.13%) of the CF population, with a current ratio of approximately one General or Flag Officer per 790 members. In 1986 and 1996 they represented .14% of the CF population. Since 1990, the number of Generals and Colonels has been cut by 36% and a further cut of 5% in Generals and 10% in Colonels is expected by the end of the decade. Generals will then represent .12% of the CF, with a ratio of about one General/Flag officer per 857 members. This is a higher ratio than is the case in the U.S. (1:1786), Germany (1:1587) and France (1:940), using equivalent ranks. It is, however, higher than is the ratio in the U.K. (1:474), Australia (1:427) and Norway (1:473).

The CF Military Occupation Structure (MOS). The MOS has been under review since 1995 and changes have already been implemented or are currently under study. Ten years ago there were 100 NCM and 42 officer occupations. Currently, there are almost the same number of officer occupations (41), but 13 less NCM occupations. Nearly 45% of CF members are serving in the army uniform, 37% in the air uniform, and 18% in the naval uniform. Base reductions, closures and amalgamations that have occurred, and are expected to occur in

the future, (i.e., closure of Germany CF bases, formation of four CF Army "Super-Bases"), as well as alternative service delivery initiatives, may also impact on occupational structure.

PROFILE OF ENROLEES and CF MEMBERS

Enrolees. In 1968, the average age of enrolees was 19. By 1996, the average age of enrolees increased gradually to 22.5. Prior to 1973, about 5% of enrolees were female. Female enrolment increased to 10% in 1973, was as high as 21% in 1992, but declined to 11% in more recent years. Since the 1970s, the proportion of enrolees that are not single when they joined the CF increased considerably. The proportion of enrolees who were married, living common-law or separated more than doubled, from 6% in 1968 to 16% in 1996. The inclusion of common-law partners contributed to this increase. Reflecting patterns of education in the Canadian population, educational attainment of enrolees increased dramatically over the years. In 1968 about 9% of enrolees had only an elementary school education. This declined to 0.1% in 1996. In 1968, 1% of enrolees had completed at least one year of college and 3% had completed at least one year of university. By 1996, these percentages increased to 14% and 9% respectively.

The Aging CF Population. The general population is aging as is the CF Regular Force population. At the end of 1996, the majority of service members were in the 30 to 40 year old bracket and less than one-third were under the age of 30. Just ten years earlier nearly 60% were under the age of 30. The aging of the CF is particularly pronounced among officers. On average, officers were 34.7 years old and NCMs were 33.1 years old in 1996. Similarly, the bulk of the Canadian labour force is in the 25 to 54 age group. Despite the fact that downsizing has considerably reduced recruiting levels, the age profile of service members remains considerably lower than in the labour force, reflecting the compulsory retirement at age 55.

Education of CF Members. CF members are better educated now than they were in the past. In 1996, 13.4% of service members possessed a university degree, and 10.7% had completed post-secondary education. This is up from 1987 when 10.5% of CF personnel had graduated from a university and 7.2% from a post-secondary institution. This trend holds for Officers and NCMs. As of January 1997, 60% of officers had university degrees (including 7% with post-graduate degrees) and 14.5% of NCMs had completed post-secondary education or attended university (but not completed a degree). In 1987, only 9% of NCMs had attained the same education level.

The general Canadian population is also better educated in 1996. The proportion of Canadians (15 years and over) with a university degree doubled, from 6% in 1976, to 13% in 1996. Similarly, the proportion of Canadians with some post-secondary education increased from 23% to about one-third over the same time period. Since 1976, the proportion of Canadians with less than a grade nine education has declined from 25% to 12% in 1996. This decline is principally related to differential mortality rates by education, as the very oldest members of society did not have the same access to secondary school prior to the 1940's as has been the situation in more recent decades.

Women in the CF. Traditionally, women filled support roles in the CF; however, since the Human Rights Tribunal decision of 1989, the participation of women in operational roles has increased both at the officer and NCM level. All occupations are open to women, although they currently do not serve on submarines. With the recent application of the Employment Equity Act, the CF is monitoring specific occupations to improve the participation of women and other designated groups. Over the past 20 years, there has been an increase in the number of women in the CF, particularly at the officer level. From 1976 to 1996 the percentage of service women has doubled to 10.7% of the Regular Force (although this figure is still far from the 50.5% women represent in the general Canadian population). The increase in the proportion of women in the CF has levelled off in recent years, as more females than males have departed during the voluntary reduction program, and there has been very limited recruiting.

Women have also moved into the more senior levels in greater numbers. At both the NCM and Officer levels, the proportion of women employed in the senior ranks (Major to Colonel and Warrant Officer to Chief Warrant Officer) has doubled in the last 10 years. However, the percentage of women reaching the senior ranks remains well below the proportion of men who attain the same rank levels, especially at the General Officer rank levels

where there have been very few women. Because the CF is a bottom loaded system, it may take considerable time for women to be reflected in greater proportions at senior levels.

Francophones and Anglophones in the CF. Representation of Francophones and Anglophones in the CF has changed little during the past 10 years, however, the proportion of French-speaking members at senior rank levels has nearly doubled in the same period. As of 1996, Francophone members represented 28% of the CF. This figure slightly exceeds the 23% of the Canadian population reporting French as their mother tongue in 1996.

Aboriginal and Visible Minority Representation. The proportion of immigrants in Canada has remained relatively stable since 1991 at about 16% of the Canadian population. However, today's immigrant population is different in composition than it has been in the past. Immigration is now more common from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America while not as predominant from traditional European sources. Within the past decade the CF has undertaken efforts to estimate and increase its representation of Aboriginal people and visible minority group members. A CF census conducted in 1995 revealed that 1.6% of Regular Force personnel were Aboriginal people and 1.8% belonged to visible minority groups (Ewins, 1997). At the time, Aboriginal people represented 3.9% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 1995). The proportion of visible minorities in the Canadian population has increased rapidly. Since data on visible minorities began to be collected in 1981, representation grew from 4.9% to 9.7%, a decade later (Statistics Canada, 1996).

CF MEMBER'S FAMILIES

Married CF Members. Since 1986, the proportion of married members has remained relatively stable. In 1996, 70.8% of CF members were married and an additional 9% were in common-law relationships. Married service couples (i.e., both are in the CF) account for another 6.8% of personnel. As the number of women in the CF has increased, so has the number of married service couples. The proportion of CF members who are married is roughly the same as in the total population.

Single-Parent CF Families. The number of single-parent families is on the rise. In 1996, it was estimated that 2280 serving members, or 3.7%, of the Regular Force were single-parents. This is up from 2.5% in 1986 and 1.2% in 1976. This means that 1 in every 13 CF families is a single-parent family. In comparison, in 1996, almost 1 in every 5 children in Canada lived with a single-parent. As is the case for the general Canadian population, the portion of CF members who are divorced or separated has increased. This group is 5.3% of the CF Regular Force population, more than double what it was in 1976. However, the proportion of the CF that is divorced is still 50% less than that of the Canadian population.

Size of CF Families. CF families are smaller than they used to be. In 1996, the proportion of CF members who had children was approximately 54%, which is the same as 20 years ago, but almost 10% more than in 1987. As in the Canadian population, the number of families with three or more children has declined significantly since 1977. They represent just less than 9% of today's CF families, half that of 20 years ago. Today, most of the families in the CF have two children, a little more than the population average. There has been no increase in children living with married couple families, in contrast to strong growth in the numbers of children who lived with common-law couples and lone-parent. The average number of persons per family in the Canadian population dropped from 3.5 in 1976 to 3.1 in both 1986 and 1996.

Age of Dependents. The large majority of children of CF families are less than 11 years old. This differs from 1986 and 1976 where there was a greater proportion of children over 11 years of age. The average age of mothers at birth of first child in Canada has increased significantly over the past 2 decades. Thus, while the CF is aging, women in the CF and female spouses are also waiting to have children. This shift in the age of service members' children to a younger age group has a direct impact on child care needs and family priorities, especially for CF families with working spouses.

Spousal Employment. Spousal employment has increasingly become the norm in Canada and the CF. A 1991 study revealed that 70% of civilian spouses of military personnel were in the labour force (Truscott, 1995). When married service couples were included the participation rate increased to 79%, higher than the Canadian labour force rate of 66%. The reported employment annual income for working CF civilian spouses (\$15,559) was

considerably lower than spouses of public service employees (\$30,625). This held true for all occupations, but differences in gender, age, experience, and geographical location may account for some of the disparity. Unemployment income comprised a greater proportion of CF spouses annual income than was the case of spouses of public servants. On average, the employment earnings of CF personnel were higher than those of members of the Public Service and military family income was higher than average Canadian family income, but less than average family income of Public Service employees.

Housing. While 50% of military families lived in military Married Quarters in 1979, this has declined dramatically over the years. In 1997, only about 30% of families lived in Married Quarters (Canadian Forces Housing Authority, 1997). Longer posting lengths, the closure of many stations/bases in isolated areas, availability of affordable housing, an older force, higher rates of spousal employment and the age of the current stock of Married Quarters have all contributed to this change. Attitudinal studies reveal that dissatisfaction with military housing and accommodation has doubled since 1985 to approximately 40% (Thivierge, 1998; Truscott, Popoff, & Hysert, 1985-86).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CF

Organizational Change. Downsizing, restructuring and new priorities in the CF are likely to impact on recruitment, retention and member satisfaction. For example, limited recruiting has taken place in recent years and there is increased emphasis on recruiting from non-traditional groups. The increased emphasis on operational capabilities and the reduction of personnel in support roles through alternative service delivery will also have broad impacts on recruitment and retention. Uncertainty resulting from organizational change, diminished promotion opportunities, changes in policies, perceptions of conditions of service relative to the civilian sector, etc. also impact on morale and satisfaction. Technological change in occupations, systems and operations require different skill sets than was previously the case.

The Changing Face of Personnel. The CF has placed considerable emphasis in recent years in broadening its recruiting base and increasing its representation of non-traditional groups. Beyond determining appropriate recruiting strategies, changes in policies and practices may be required to motivate and retain these personnel. An older, better educated force may require different training approaches. To retain experienced personnel while promotion opportunities are limited may require different pay strategies, an enhanced focus on the value of lateral job movement or opportunities to move into and out of the CF. Salary scales based on skills and technical abilities rather than rank may be required to attract and retain those in some occupational groups. Socio-demographic changes may also influence health care requirements, physical capabilities, as well as attitudes toward pay, benefits and other conditions of service.

Employee Expectations. Research indicates that employee expectations are changing. As organizations downsize, retaining the right employees and creating environments that keep them satisfied is a high priority for organizations. Current work suggests that benefits that assist employees balance work and family/life and improve the quality of work-life, will be interpreted by employees as organizational commitment and support. As a result, employees will stay longer, will be more productive, and have a more positive attitude toward their employer. In summary, benefits may be considered as a strategic investment by an organization.

The Changing Family. Changes to the Canadian family, and the CF family, are influencing and will continue to impact on conditions of service and quality of life issues faced by the CF. Given the increase in spousal employment, single parents, dual service member families, coupled with an increase in younger children, the CF may expect increased calls for policies, programs and working conditions that reflect these realities. Reductions in the number of bases, the development of "Super-Bases", and longer postings will provide CF families with more stability. It is expected that military personnel will not differ from other Canadians in their desire for home ownership.

SUMMARY

The CF is smaller than it was 10 or 20 years ago, with most of these reductions occurring between 1992-1996. The rank and occupational structure has changed minimally over the last 20 years, although significant changes

are anticipated. The participation of women in operational roles has continued to progress since the 1989 Human Rights Tribunal decision, however, increased participation has been slowed by the downsizing of the CF and limited recruitment, particularly in the support trades. The profile of CF membership has generally followed Canadian socio-demographic trends of the past 20 years, particularly with respect to age and education. The CF family is somewhat unique (slightly larger and younger), with family needs that are more pronounced than those of the typical Canadian family. Frequent postings, often to rural or semi-isolated areas, operational deployments, and extended absences of the family member for training place unique demands on military personnel and their spouses and children. These socio-demographic changes in Canada and the CF will continue to result in demands for reviews, modifications and improvements to personnel support programs and conditions of service, including pay and benefits.

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